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PEYRERIIUS, AND THEOLOGICAL CRITICISM.

“Veritas laborat sæpe, extinguitur nunquam.”

LIVY, Hist., xxii, 39, 19.

“Die Inquisition kommt nicht auf. Wir sind nicht gemacht, wie die Spanier, unser Gewissen tyrannisiren zu lassen.”

GÖTTE, Egmont, i, 1.

AFTER two centuries of neglect and oblivion, the name of Isaac de la Peyrère is once more received and honoured, as that of the first scholar who broke through the meshes of a groundless traditional prejudice, and proved that even in Scripture there are no decisive evidences of man's descent from a single pair; nay more, that there are distinct indications of non-Adamite races.

The theory of La Peyrère, derived partly from Genesis and partly from the Epistle to the Romans, was, that there had been two separate creations of man; one on the sixth day along with the beasts, at the mere fiat of God, and the other many thousand years afterwards. The first was the creation of the Gentiles. In the first creation, man and woman are created simultaneously, and no names are given them. In the second, Adam is created out of the dust, the breath of God is breathed into his nostrils, and Eve is subsequently created out of his rib. Peyrère saw how many difficulties would thus be obviated, though these were in his time far less numerous and far less formidable than they have become, in consequence of the progress of science.

His system was, however, *mainly* founded on Rom. v, 12-14, from which he deduced that there were *two* classes of men. One of these—viz., the Jews, were descended from Adam, who, at his creation, had received *a law*, the violation of which brought death among his race. The other class—viz., Gentiles, could only commit *natural* sins, because they had received *no law*; nevertheless, they too were subjected to the natural consequence of death—so that “death reigned from Adam to Moses, *even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.*”

Peyrère was two centuries before his time; and whether we accept or reject his special theories, it is impossible not to admire his acumen, his candour, and his courage. Like all people who are wiser, fairer, and more keen-sighted than their cotemporaries, he was of course persecuted and rendered as miserable as his theological adversaries, with their three favourite weapons—persecution, imprisonment, and

* See Latronne, Rev. des Deux Mondes, Paris, 1834, p. 602.

fire—had it in their power to make him. He had dared* to step out of the magic exegetical circle which theology had drawn around all the sciences, and his presumption was punished with prompt violence. Indeed, so severe were the measures of his opponents, that the second part of his book never appeared.

Isaac de la Peyrère* was born at Bordeaux in 1594, of a noble Protestant family, and he distinguished himself for bravery at the celebrated siege of Montauban, where he commanded a company. He then entered the service of the Prince de Condé, which he quitted in 1644, to accompany La Thuillerie, the French ambassador, to Denmark, where he collected the materials for his works on Iceland and Greenland. On his return, he attached himself to the young Prince de Condé, who sent him as his agent to Spain, and whom he afterwards followed in Flanders and Holland. There he got his now famous book—*Præadamitæ*—anonymously printed, in 1655. The authorship was, however, known; and his hypothesis, although it solves many difficulties of the Mosaic cosmogony, raised a violent tempest against him. The same year the Bishop of Namur censured the book; it received the honour of being burned by the hangman, by order of the Parliament of Paris; and the Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Malines ordered the author to be arrested. In February 1656, thirty armed men rushed into his room at Brussels, dragged him through the streets, and by consent of the Archduke Leopold, put him in the tower of Turenberg. This was sanctioned by the Prince de Condé, who had a warm regard for Peyrère, but, with his Jesuit confessor, hoped, by a judicious use of terror, to prevail on him “à se convertir.” The Prince, on his promise to abjure and retract his book, procured his release, and provided him with money to go to Rome, throw himself at the Pope’s feet, and embrace Catholicism. Like Galileo before him, he was forced to go through a form of recantation, and the Pope (Alex. VII) received him graciously. He rejoined Condé in the Low Countries, and became his librarian; but subsequently retired on a small pension to the oratory of Nôtre Dame des Vertus, where he died Jan. 30, 1676.

A friend† says of him, that “He was still infatuated with his *Præadamites*, and it is likely he died with that fantastical notion. He would have been very well pleased if he had known that there is a Rabbi who mentions Adam’s preceptor.”

* Some meagre materials for his biography may be gleaned from Bayle, and from *La France Protestante*, by M. M. Haag.

† Continuation of the *Menagiana*, Dutch ed., p. 38, in Bayle, s. v. Pereira.

The fury of theological hatred raged against him with uncommon vigour, and the year after his book appeared (1656) it was answered in five or six refutations (?), whose flaming character may be judged of by their titles. One, that of Danhawerus, was called "*Præadamitis, sive fabula primorum hominum ante Adamum conditorum explosa.*" Another, published by Ursinus at Frankfort, was entitled "*Novus Prometheus, Præadamitarum plastes, ad Caucasum relegatus et religatus.*" A third, by A. Hulsius, was "*Nonens Præadamiticum, sive confutatio vani et socinisanis cujusdam somnii, etc.*" Lugd. Bat. 1656. He says, "Perturbet te Dominus, quia perturbasti Israellem." Heidanus was even obliged to reply to the charge of having *published* the book, as a "detestanda calumnia," and an "effrons et immane mendacium, quâvis pœnâ dignissimum." The disgustingly energetic remarks of Petrus ab Andlo on this subject may be found in Bayle.

"Religious subjects," says Payne Knight, "being beyond the reach of sense or reason are always embraced or rejected with violence or heat. Men *think they know because they are sure they feel, and are firmly convinced because strongly agitated.*" The remark applies with full force to the subject before us, where cartloads of abuse were poured in to conceal and fill up the chasms of argument. Even so respectable and learned a writer as Heidegger is not ashamed to furnish fresh extracts to a spicilegium drawn from the disgraceful—I had well-nigh said the infamous—pages of theological controversy. Take this specimen of that well-known style! "*Sed meritissimo deridiculo et odio habitus ille nuper cum nocturnis fungis, tristi lunâ natus, Præadamitarum patronus, qui cum animum* induxisset, etc.*" A few of the usual familiar imputations of fraud, dishonesty, infidelity, etc., follow, in the common fashion of such 'religious' reviewers (who mostly ignore the existence of the ninth commandment); and then, after the dogma has been denounced as 'musteum', 'impium', and 'absurdum', La Peyrère is finally transfixed with the epithet "fanaticus." "*E pur si muove!*" The name of Peyrère will be revered when that of Heidegger is reposing in venerable dust. A type of all these faults in their most concentrated form may be found in the tedious and irritating compilation of Dr. Smyth *On the Unity of the Human Races*. He says (p. 35), "when *infidelity* sought to erect its dominion on the ruins of Christianity (!), Voltaire, Rousseau, Peyrère (!), etc., introduced the theory of an original diversity, in order thereby to *overthrow the truth and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.*" To say nothing of the preposterous chronological mistake, which shews that Dr. Smyth

* Heidegger, *Hist. Patriarc.*, Ex. iv, p. 148.

knew nothing whatever about La Peyrère, and had probably never read a line of his work, the sentence contains a *positive slander*, hardly worth noticing except for its amazing folly. For Peyrère was the most devout, the most earnest believer *in the inspiration of every word of Scripture*; and it is *from Scripture* that his doctrine is deduced. Peyrère believed in Præadamites* *solely* because he *considered* that the Bible recognised their existence. The scientific arguments were in his day unknown. To class him, either chronologically or intellectually, among the free-thinkers is an enormous error. Yet Dr. Smyth, who thus shews his complete unacquaintance with the subject, is introduced with a loud preliminary trumpet-flourish from English and Scotch divines!

It is by such base weapons of calumny and abuse that Polygenists have been met from the time of Peyrerius down to that of Vogt, from Hulsius and Heidegger down to Dr. Bachman and Dr. Smyth. We may well ask with M. de Quatrefages—a monogenist who is tolerant because he is scientific, and courteous because he is not ignorant: “à quoi bon toutes ces colères? Les arrêts de l’inquisition n’ont ni arrêté la terre sur sa marche, ni fait tourner le soleil autour de notre globe.... Les violences de langage, les insinuations malveillantes, les railleries, ne changeront pas davantage les relations existantes entre les groupes humains.” Such a style as that which we have been noticing is never really efficacious. It has served no other object than that of bringing religious controversy into profound contempt. What have those clergy and religious writers now to say for themselves who fulminated their forgotten and idle anathemas against the first discoverers of geology, and who, *more suo*, discussing that theory with colossal arrogance and unfathomable ignorance, “thought, or sometimes pretended to think, that they were crushing a heresy, *when they were denying without examination what might almost be called the lowest kind of revelation*, since the truths of nature, as Scripture teaches, bear witness to the perfections of the Creator.”† If such clerical dogmatists *will* not learn wisdom, the rent which already exists between the teaching of the national Science and the national Church will, with the most injurious consequences, be irretrievably widened.‡

* I here judge Peyrère *by his own book*; not by the malicious remarks made about him, of which I am well aware. De Quatrefages takes the same view. *Rev. des Deux Mondes*, Dec. 1860.

† Gen. of Earth and Man, p. vi.

‡ That this scorn and contempt is fast becoming the natural tone of scientific men towards a large body of the clergy is well known; and whose fault is it? It speaks most loudly in the hasty and irreverent language of C. Vogt, which I will not translate (*Vorlesungen*, § 13). He says: “Ein Adam . . . ein Noah . . . das

Few scientific truths have ever been discovered—few discoveries have been made for the last five centuries, against which the combined forces of prejudice and ignorance have not marshalled their array of mistaken Biblical inferences. We leave it to others to write this sad, this humiliating, but instructive history. Here we will but follow Professor Vogt in alluding to two of the *most* modern instances to shew that the religious critics of to-day are no wiser than of old, and have gained nothing from the experience of past defeats.

1. Few ethnologists have done more for science than the calm-minded, the noble and earnest student, Dr. Morton, of Philadelphia. Belonging to the highest order of physicians, he devoted lifelong researches to American, and afterwards to *general* cranioscopy. His researches, pursued with continuous ardour, and directed by a peculiarly ingenious and original method, led him to the conviction that mankind had sprung from different origins, and could not possibly have descended from a single pair. Like a brave and honest man, he did not shrink from publishing his conclusions. This was a great stumblingblock to the Reverend Dr. Bachman, of Charleston, who thereupon wrote in a friendly way to Dr. Morton,* that he must enter the lists against this view, but hoped that the controversy would not weaken their previous friendship, since he regarded Dr. Morton as a benefactor of his country, and an ornament to science. Dr. Bachman then published a book, in which, although he displayed the grossest ignorance of his subject, 'he mounted his high horse, treated the good Dr. Morton *de haut en bas* in an arrogant and offensive manner, and in that inflated declamatory style, which is too frequent in his profession.' Morton replied in a calm, dignified, and even friendly manner,

waren Sätze, die als Vorbedingung jeder wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung sollten aufgezungen werden, und ohne deren Annahme nach der Behauptung der Frommen die Welt in Gefahr stand und noch steht, ohne weiteres in den Abgrund der Hölle zu versinken. . . . So hat man hier die ganze Klerisei nebst sämtlichen gläubigen Schafen und stössigen Böcken auf dem Halse—and was das sagen will, das kann nur Derjenige wissen, der sich einmal mitten drin befunden hat." [As many of our readers are unable to read German, we beg to append here a translation of the above paragraph for their satisfaction. "One Adam, one ancestor, one Noah, with three sons as second ancestors—these were the premises forced upon scientific inquiry, without the assumption of which the naturalist was unceremoniously sent to hell. Where in the former case we had only to do with philosophers, who in their academical gowns only talk to a select audience, here we had against us the whole clergy, with their faithful sheep and butting rams—a state of things which can only be appreciated from experience." EDITOR.]

* If we here quote, without translating and without approving, the words of C. Vogt, whose account of this controversy is taken from Morton's Biography, it is only to show the bitter spirit of hostility to clerical science (if we may be allowed the term) which animates physical inquirers. "Nach der Weise der Pfäfflein, die stets zu Auhagen die Katzenpfote machen, schreibt er zuerst freundlich an Dr. Morton." (Vorlesungen, § 14.)

repeating, extending, and developing his scientific arguments. This was quite intolerable to the Reverend Dr. Bachman. 'He lost all self-control; accused Morton of belonging to a conspiracy which had for its express object the overthrow of a doctrine, which was bound in the closest connection with the faith and hope of the Christian both in time and in eternity; he declared that infidelity was the only possible logical consequence of such a view, an infidelity which, in the name of threatened society, must be energetically resisted.' How utterly false and calumnious such assertions are, will be obvious; but when the clergy use such language as this, we know, as Morton's biographer observes, that it is the trumpet of internecine war. This took place in 1850, and doubtless Dr. Morton would have felt the effect of religious persecution, had not his death in the following year ended the controversy. And what is the result? Morton's name is venerated throughout the civilised world; Dr. Bachman, who would otherwise have remained utterly unknown, will be curiously immortalised in the amber of Morton's fame.

2. Even scientific men are not beyond the reach of deeply rooted traditional prejudice. How else can we account for the long contempt and neglect of the now celebrated discoveries of M. Boucher de Perthes? The whole world, scientific and unscientific, had made up its mind that man had *not* existed on this earth more than six thousand years, and this was a reason for quietly ignoring, or explaining by the loosest theories, the occasional discovery of human remains among the bones of extinct animals. Cuvier had even denied the existence of fossil monkeys; but he had not been dead for five years when M. Lartet, in 1836, discovered fossil remains of the *Pliopithecus antiquus*; Dr. Lund found in Brazil, in 1837, a fossil simian of a now extinct species; and other geologists found similar remains in the tertiary strata in other parts of the world.* Since that period undoubted fossilised *human* remains have been discovered in such situations as to have won the reluctant consent of most scientific men to the fact of man's antiquity on the surface of the globe. But, had not prejudice stood in the way, the conclusion would have been arrived at long ago. *Before the end of the last century*, Mr. Frere had discovered flint-implements at Hoxne, in Sussex, "at a depth of about twelve feet in a stratified soil," under circumstances which led him to conclude that they had belonged to a manufactory of such implements

* For a good and comprehensive review of these discoveries, see *Anthropol. Rev.*, i, pp. 68-79; Boucher de Perthes, *De l'Homme Antediluvien et de ses Œuvres*.

at a period remoter than that of the present world. This discovery, like that of Schmerling, in 1833, fell still-born; nor was it until 1839 that M. Boucher de Perthes succeeded in gaining the slightest attention to his similar discovery of antediluvian implements. For years he battled in vain against prejudice, ignorance, and theological opposition. "Practical people," he says, "laughed, shrugged their shoulders, and even disdained to examine the circumstances for themselves; in one word—they were afraid. They dreaded, in short, to make themselves associates of a heresy. When, however, the facts were so obvious that any one could corroborate them, they were still less willing to believe them, and threw in my path an obstacle greater than remonstrance, than criticism, than satire, even than persecution—namely, the silence of contempt. They no longer disputed the facts; they no longer gave themselves the trouble to deny them; but simply buried them in oblivion. Then they invented explanations which were in truth far more surprising than the facts themselves; the stone hatchets were the result of fire, a volcano had flung them out in a fluid condition, they had fallen into water,* and had assumed their present shape in consequence of the sudden cooling, since some of them resemble Prince Rupert's drops! Others called Cold to their assistance; pebbles might have been split by frost, and shaped into knives and hatchets! or they were the mere forgeries of the workmen; or they might have sunk into the sand by their own gravity!† All these objections troubled me very little; what irritated me far more than criticism was the obstinate refusal to examine the facts, and the exclamation impossible! before any one had given himself the trouble to see whether it was the case or no." Elsewhere, M. Boucher complains that "being a purely geological question, it became the subject of religious controversy." Some people attacked his religion; the rest took refuge in that favourite argument of bigotry, the charge of presumption. 'Do you, a single obscure person, venture to put your opinion against that which all other men have adopted?' Here, again, we ask what was the result of the controversy? Truth and science triumphed, and nearly all geologists, all archæologists, all, except a few theologians and obstinate persons—who consider a man lost for time and for eternity, if any belief of his militates against

* This was the theory of Mr. Edwards of Birmingham.

† M. Boucher has not mentioned the belief of A. Wagner that the stone hatchets are a mere *lusus naturæ*! This was the theory adopted by the theological opponents of geology with respect to fossil remains; but it is amazing to find it cropping up again in a scientific work of the eighteenth century.

any idol or prejudice of theirs—have accepted, as a fact scientifically proved, the Antiquity of Man.

It is ever thus; the true thought of the solitary thinker in his closet is stronger than priests and princes; is omnipotent even against the banded conspiracies of the whole world's prejudice and interest. After twenty-five years of devotion to study, during which he was "for a long time railed at, or what is worse, treated with contempt, M. Boucher de Perthes had to struggle against universal prejudices, but by his perseverance and courage received first some tardy support, until at length this depressed truth broke forth in science."*

PHILALETHES.

MISCEGENATION.†

DURING the last two months there have come reports to Europe of the remarkable form of insanity which is just now affecting the people of Federal America. We should not have thought it worth while to take any notice of the publication of the pamphlet under review, if it did not give us some insight into the extraordinary mental aberration now going on in Yankeedom. It is useless, however, longer to close our eyes to the phenomenon now appearing in the New World. Before we saw this pamphlet, we expected that it was merely a hoax, which some political wag had concocted for the benefit of his party. But an examination of the works dispels that illusion, and shows that the author attempts to found his theory on scientific facts!

There is, indeed, just enough of the current scientific opinion of the day, and also enough of literary merit, to enable readers of this work to get very much confused as to the real nature of the opinions and theory therein propounded. The anonymous author starts with some general assertions, and if these be admitted, the theory is not so utterly absurd as it otherwise appears. Monogenists will, indeed, be astonished at the use made of their doctrine; but it is from the

* See Vogt, *Vorlesungen über des Menschen*, § 18. [A translation of this work is announced to be in the press, and will soon be published as one of the series of works brought out by the Anthropological Society. EDITOR.] *Anthropological Rev.*, i, 80; Dr. Knox, *ib.*, ii, 261.

† Miscegenation, or the Theory of the Blending of Races, applied to the American White Man and Negro. Trübner and Co., 1864.